Regional carriers urge FirstNet to 'maximize interoperability'
Fierce Wireless Tech   By Monica Alleven

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The Competitive Carriers Association (CCA) wants the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) to adopt technical requirements for the National Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) that maximize interoperability of the network.

The CCA made its stance known when it filed its comments with FirstNet earlier this week. CCA also is urging FirstNet to provide states the opportunity to evaluate detailed FirstNet plan information in the opt-out process and to clarify key concepts set out in the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, FirstNet's enabling legislation.

"I thank FirstNet for its continued engagement with CCA members and cannot stress enough the importance of maximizing interoperability within the NPSBN," said CCA President and CEO Steven K. Berry in a press release. "If anyone understands the importance of interoperability within networks as well as public safety officials, it's CCA members. An interoperable network will greatly benefit local, state and federal public safety officials and consumers, especially during times of an emergency. To achieve this important goal, we encourage FirstNet to prescribe standards that apply to all network equipment and elements for use on the NPSBN."

CCA's membership includes more than 100 carriers covering more than 95 percent of the country's population. Members include Cellcom, Sprint and US Cellular.

Last month, FirstNet extended the comment period for its Second Notice through April 28. The extension was made in response to multiple requests from stakeholders for extensions and in recognition of the work states and territories are undertaking in preparation for key public meetings with FirstNet.

While some industry observers surmise [one or more nationwide network operators could step up and bid](#) on the FirstNet network, potentially providing existing towers and networks for the service, FirstNet's draft RFP includes proposals for both nationwide and regional radio access network (RAN) elements. A nationwide proposal

would include the core network, covered lease agreements (CLAs), RANs and states and territories. A regional RAN proposal comprises CLAs, RANs and states and territories. The regional proposals could include one or several states and RANs, [according to MissionCriticalMag](#).

FirstNet's mandate to build the nation's first dedicated public safety broadband network will work best with as many states as possible participating, but it's unknown if or how many states will opt in. FirstNet has been holding meetings on a state-by-state basis as part of its consultation process.

"CCA urges FirstNet to provide states with as much information as possible when presenting its proposed plan to them, and to design the state opt-out process in such a way that enables efficient collaboration among regional partners and efficient use of existing facilities in the event a state opts-out," CCA said. "Regional cooperation, leveraging the resources of carriers serving nearby jurisdictions, can improve efficiencies in partnerships with FirstNet or potential opt-out states."

Clearly, regional carriers are interested in participating. "Public safety is a major concern for competitive carriers, and CCA members are ready and willing to work with FirstNet to help ensure the most robust NPSBN possible," the CCA statement added. "We applaud FirstNet's thoughtful consideration and outreach to stakeholders and look forward to our continued work on this important public safety issue."

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